

News

Macomb County
Office of Public Affairs



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Contact: Phil Frame
Office of Public Affairs
586-469-5125
phil.frame@macombcountymi.gov

Edsel Ford II keynotes inaugural Focus Macomb meeting

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. – Ford Motor Co. board director Edsel B. Ford II is the keynote speaker at the inaugural meeting of Focus Macomb: A Partnership for Economic Growth.

The Focus Macomb meeting is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 28, at the Best Western Sterling Inn, 34911 Van Dyke Ave., Sterling Heights.

This is the first gathering of 100 community leaders invited by Macomb County Board of Commissioners Chair Nancy White to discuss issues affecting the county's economic growth and make recommendations for change.

"We have a dynamic group of leaders from business, education and government who have agreed to focus their expertise on changing perceptions and realities about Macomb County," said White. "Our goal is to make Macomb County a can't-miss destination for business growth and new jobs."

Ford kicks off Focus Macomb with a speech about the need for regional cooperation. Ford is a retired Ford vice president and former president and chief operating officer of Ford Credit. He joined Ford in 1974 and was elected to its Board of Directors in 1988.

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Ford recently became involved in a new initiative sponsored by the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce called Design Regional Detroit.

The Focus Macomb initiative is co-chaired by Roy Rose, president of Anderson, Eckstein & Westrick Inc., an engineering/architectural company in Shelby Township, and Don Torline, president of Baker College of Clinton Township.

Members of Focus Macomb will be assigned to four committees:

- Quality of Life
- Business Development
- Education/Workforce Development
- Transportation

Each committee will be led by co-chairs. Rose also will serve as an ex-officio member of the Quality of Life and Transportation committees, and Torline as an ex-officio member of the Business Development and Education/Workforce Development committees.

“The committees are charged with forming relevant and achievable strategies for improvements in their specific areas and presenting a plan of action to the Macomb County Board of Commissioners,” said Steve Cassin, executive director of the county Department of Planning & Economic Development.

The committees will set their own meeting schedules. An executive committee consisting of committee co-chairs, Rose and Torline will monitor progress. Action plans will be presented at the Nov. 22 meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

The committee topics are based on a 2004 Macomb County marketing study conducted by Gyro Creative Group of Detroit. Commissioned by the Planning & Economic Development Department and led by Gyro, the project gathered feedback from non-residents and residents and sought input from focus groups representing business, education, non-profit agencies, government, faith-based organizations and real estate.

The study identified Macomb County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (a traditional marketing SWOT analysis) and came up with four areas that required attention:

- Assuring a high quality of life is available to all residents, including people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Diversifying the economy to replace lost manufacturing jobs
- Raising the percentage of residents with college degrees
- Improving roads to make transportation easier

"The work of Focus Macomb won't be over in November," White said. "Like Oakland County's Business Roundtable, which has been in place since 1993, Focus Macomb is an ongoing effort. It will continue working to make sure its original recommendations are implemented, identify new issues and create action plans for those."

About Macomb County

Macomb County is an enriching community in Southeastern Michigan that has one of the state's fastest rates of growth. Its 834,000 residents make it Michigan's third-largest county, with direct access to Lake St. Clair and Anchor Bay, and a host of cultural and entertainment options. Its highly skilled workforce and investment in new and expanding businesses make it open to enterprise. Active civic leadership translates into balanced budgets and Michigan's second-lowest tax rate. An increasingly diverse population and high quality of life make Macomb County accessible to all.

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